

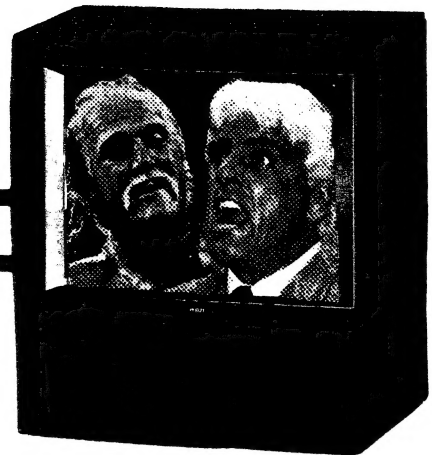
MATWATCH

213 Pine Hills Ave. Auburn Al 36830

JUNE 26-JULY 9

(DOUBLE ISSUE)

VOL. 2, NOS. 1-2



One Year & Still Here

Thank you. That may seem an insignificant two words but it is because of your kind support that we are still here, plugging away at my favorite pastime. One year ago, this bulletin began, somewhat as a friendly network of seven friends and has expanded into a family of more than 500, a mini-business, if you will. It is your confidence which has restored our faith that this was the right thing to do and we have not regretted a moment.

You'll see a minor change in the look of MATWATCH's cover this week to reflect more of our emphasis on the television side of pro wrestling. This is a double issue, partially to commemorate our first anniversary and even more so, to give me a much-needed week away during Fourth of July week to spend with family and somewhat recharge the batteries. Doing this 50 weeks out of the last year somewhat requires a chance to step back and breathe on occasion, particularly while still maintaining a regular job at Auburn University.

We have seen enormous changes in this industry in just the last year alone: the entry of veteran broadcaster Ted Turner into the wrestling business and the simultaneous evaporating of the Jim Crockett family as a major force, the subsequent problems in transition of the NWA between the two groups, overall declining ratings and shrinking numbers of hours of available wrestling on many stations across the country, more pay-cable wrestling shows than ever and lower buy-rates, the expiration of Ron Fuller, Billy Jack Haynes and Jody Hamilton as promoters, the firing of Dusty Rhodes from the NWA and the once-thought impossible sight of Rhodes in the WWF. We've also seen all too many deaths among wrestling's greats, including the passing of one of the last great mavericks in the sport, Bruiser Brody. We've seen Hulk Hogan frontline a movie and reclaim a role he never really lost as the cornerstone of the Vince McMahon dynasty.

In this special issue, in addition to our regular news and features---which you'll find in the second half of the edition, we'll take the time to answer the key questions you've asked us about the newsletter and about wrestling's future, particularly as it relates to TV; we'll give you a look at our all-star team of what we consider to be the great announcers in wrestling history (some we'll omit are your favorites---but take it as a subjective view...yours are equally valid); and we offer an exclusive interview with one of the nation's foremost academic experts on the subject of pro wrestling, Dr. Gerald Morton, whose 1985 book, *WRESTLING TO RASSLIN'* remains a respected study of popular culture.

You have been wonderful to encourage us these past 52 weeks when you felt we did well. Likewise, you have justifiably slapped our hand if we went in a direction you felt was not necessary. You have freely shared your thoughts with us and I have learned much from your insight---including reinforcing the fact that, to quote Tom Snyder: "the things I think are right often turn out to be the wrongest things."

I hope you'll continue with us on this journey in the next year, wherever it may take us. We will continue to endeavor to bring you responsible and timely reporting and appropriate commentary on the key issues which develop. You may agree or disagree with the thrust of specific aspects of MATWATCH---but our most cherished prize is your respect. We hope never to lose it.

We invite you to share MATWATCH with others. But remember, it's not for everyone. Allow those who continue to enjoy the illusion of contest in pro wrestling and choose to believe to do so in the same fashion many of you once did. Cherish the fact that your appreciation of this genre is unique. Hopefully, despite its many flaws and excessive hype, we'll continue to be treated to a form of entertainment which has NO TIME LIMIT.

Year One: Steve Answers

For the last month, we have solicited your questions on issues vital to the current state and future of pro wrestling. Some of the personality and trivia questions submitted will be dealt with in a later issue but I've selected the best of about 30 submissions to deal with as we begin Year Two. Some include how we put MATWATCH together, because that was a recurring question:

WHAT IS A TYPICAL WEEK FOR YOU? (Dan Farren, Reseda CA)

Well, of course, we are at Auburn University Monday through Friday, either handling the efforts of Auburn's Radio-TV Services or in class. That, in itself, is busy enough. For the university, we supervise recruiting videos, video releases, and special highlight productions of Auburn events. And we're an active part of Auburn's communications program in the College of Liberal Arts. Rebecca and I spend our evenings together---and, for me, that includes watching at least an hour a night of wrestling from somewhere. It won't be as easy soon because we're losing our nightly strip at summer's end on WXTX in Columbus.

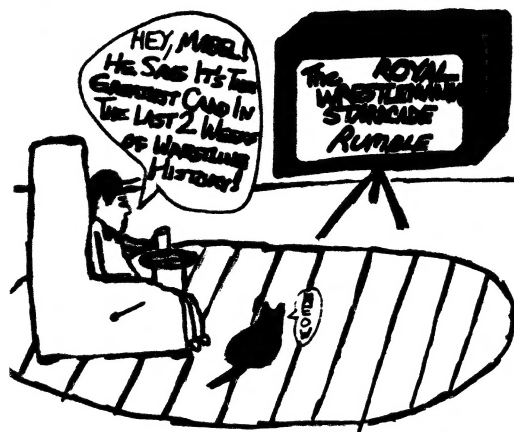
I try to work hard on MATWATCH late Friday nights, after about 10 p.m., getting together the news bits, headlines and PINFALL PROFILE segment. Generally, I will have written my weekly column on Thursday during a spare period at the office, along with I REMEMBER... But a couple of weeks, I've had to change that column, depending on the flow of events in wrestling. I approach it the same way I did in the newsroom---looking for the key item of the week which merits commentary in the TV world of pro wrestling. I'll take care of the other elements between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. Friday night and Saturday morning. Then, Saturday night or early Sunday morning, we work on TV TEMPO, trying to update all the results we can. Occasionally, we miss a report on shows we don't get but we try to be as comprehensive as possible. Sundays, we're in our local church, which takes an active role in our lives, then we go to print Sunday afternoon. Sunday night is fold and staple time. At times, we're done by 10 p.m. Other times, we've hit the bed at 2:30 a.m. Monday morning. That does not make for a great next day at the office.

DO YOU REALLY WATCH ALL THE SHOWS IN YOUR TV TEMPO REPORT? (Charlie Green, York PA)

As many as I can. There are about four key shows we do not receive here and I have three key spotters, two at TV stations, who call me in the results as soon as they get their weekly tapes in. I rely on their expertise for the show ratings if I don't see it. But I catch three unduplicated shows between 7-8 p.m. during the week, then another three hours from 9 to noon Saturday mornings, and I have two monitors going from 5-7 Saturdays for WCW and the World Wide/Continental block on another channel. Late Saturdays, it's AWA. Some weeks, depending on my personal schedule, I include the Sunday MAIN EVENT and other times, we just use the syndicated results. But in fairness to the organizations, I consider it my responsibility to try to watch their shows to give a fair subjective evaluation, even if I know they'll probably be bad, as a few are.

WHAT TRENDS DO YOU SEE IN TV WRESTLING FOR THE 1990s? (Art Baker, Cleveland OH)

Of course, like many things, that would probably have me working for a promotion if the crystal ball were accurate. But I do see increasingly less wrestling on TV than we have had the latter half of the 1980s, because---as Gordon Solie predicted for me two years ago---with the exception of Titan, the ratings are down for every promotion and viewers have reached the same point as they did three or four years ago with college football. The kick of having so much available has worn off and now, wrestling viewers are much more selective, according to their own tastes. In a sense, it's not unlike what happened to TV wrestling in the mid-1950s. Only vintage set owners remember how wrestling was once on network schedules five nights a week. Eventually, the people tired---and were treated to the premiere of the action-adventure show around 1955. So, fans were content to settle back and support their local promotions on local or regional TV. I don't think we're likely to go that far this time because with the satellite and mass syndication, I don't see us ever returning to regional territories as we once remembered them.



OVER PAY-PER VIEW?????

I do think we're going to migrate more and more toward pay-per-view as the driving force behind the industry. It won't happen tomorrow. But I expect, gradually, a decline in the overall numbers of house shows by the big promotions and it wouldn't surprise me to see us eventually evolve to a "card of the month" on pay-per-view, some of which may be priced as low as \$9.95 per. Wrestling has actually been pioneering this field before the megabucks entry of pro and college sports superevents in the late 1990s. It will happen. I'll predict right here that when college football goes to a national championship game, it will be on pay-cable because of the extraordinary revenue it will bring.

The prices of pay wrestling shows will, in time, pale in comparison to super sports events, in my view---because as mainline sports enter the field, the ability to hype a WRESTLEMANIA or a STARRCADE to stratospheric heights will be diluted, in comparison to the marketing ventures of big-time football or baseball. I'll venture that by the end of the decade, baseball's league championships will go PPV and possibly the NFL divisional playoffs. The World Series and Super Bowl will probably stay on free TV through the 90s to avert Congressional anger.

I will bet that within three to five years, we'll be down to the WWF and NWA on TV because the small promotions still trying to run weekly will eventually find it is not realistic economically to continue. Plus, every time these groups get a successful star, he will be swallowed up by the biggies. It's like what TV boxing did to the local arenas in the '40s and '50s. The old weekly shows died because people had been exposed to so much on TV---and even after weekly boxing left ABC in 1964, the local arenas didn't come back because the rookie fighters on the way up seemed boring by comparison. So, when someone asks me has the explosion been good for wrestling, I say it depends on your perspective. It's been great as far as bringing the arena into your living room on a daily basis but it has killed more towns than you know. And when the bloom finally comes off the WEF (it may be two years away, it may be unpredictable---but there will be an ultimate end to that style), it will not---in my opinion---result in a resurgence in the "local promoter" system because, in our contemporary age, people will move on to something else.

CAN TED REACH PARITY WITH VINCE? (At least 16 questioners)

Not with the size front office staff he has now---and not without better efforts to license and merchandise products that reach national audiences with the NWA wrestlers. TBS has some very able administrators: Jack Petrik, Jim Herd, Jim Ross, etc. But McMahon operates with more than 150 administrative employees, handling everything from publicity to marketing to media relations, as well as the daily storylines.

A lot of what has created adversity for the NWA has been self-inflicted. It was a near fatal mistake to move WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING from its traditional 6:05 time period and make the show float all over the TBS schedule for three months. Viewing habits are very fickle. You could take COSBY and move it to five different time periods in eight weeks and even that show would lose audience from frustration. And, I've got news for you, pal, they're not going to all flock back to WCW in the first few weeks. People are out of the habit of tuning to TBS at the early hour and they're going to have to be promoted heavily into finding the show again.

The George Scott situation is self-explanatory. With the exception of those great Flair-Steamboat matches and an occasional Luger-Windham pop, people, in general, hated the NWA in the winter of '89 and some of those folks have not returned.

A lot of traditionalists (and I still am one, too) are complaining about characters such as The Dingdongs and Norman coming into the promotion. But we may as well accept this fact: if the NWA doesn't adapt some character-centered elements that lean toward a Titan presentation, you're not going to get the young people. I'm not saying the Dingdongs & Norman are the answer---but, face it....who does 80% of the wrestling business in this country? The NWA is going to do some experimenting with characters in the next few months, I expect, and it's not going to set will with many NWA-oriented newsletter subscribers.

I will make this bold prediction: this summer and fall will be a tremendous test to see if the Ric Flair magic can continue to pop houses after this gamble of withholding the champ ends. But if there isn't at least some measurable improvement at the gates, I would consider it time to consider seriously a changing of the guard and begin, for the '90s, a transition to Sting as world champion---the guy who is most likely to hit big with kids and teens and begin a Hoganesque marketing and licensing campaign around him. I'd follow that up with a babyface Muta in a Bruce Lee role with things like Muta comic books, Muta mist kits. I may be dead wrong about all of this---because it may even fail this way. But I think these moves are inevitable, anyway. If I were such a great forecaster, they'd have me on the payroll.

I further believe that, for the sake of reducing internal turmoil---which has not been overly publicized---the time must come for the Turner people to either buy out the Crockett family's remaining shares or at least phase them out of the operation. Dissension continues from the Crocketts' bitterness over losing control of the company and it is not healthy for the future of the promotion.



STING
Champ of the Future?

YOU'VE ASKED US TO NAME THREE THINGS OF A POSITIVE NATURE WE'D DO IF WE COULD RUN THE NWA FOR A DAY. WHAT WOULD YOU DO? (Carl Miller, Dodge City KS)

1. Get a firm, signed contract from Jim Ross. I don't know for sure but I don't believe that is the case now. The NWA can ill-afford to lose his voice to another situation and if it isn't settled, it needs to be. 2. Redouble efforts to get all phases of the TBS operation working together with the NWA. Not that the key TBS executives of WCW aren't doing that every solitary day. They are. But when the WWF is Vince's entire concern and when a big conglomerate such as Turner is divided into so many different operations, it makes concentration on a wrestling company difficult. 3. Immediately hire an independent research firm, preferably the Frank Magid Co. (which works mostly with news departments of TV stations but handles other areas of entertainment research), to examine all aspects of the NWA operation: promotion, marketing, wrestlers, name recognition, announcers, personalities pushed, viewer perceptions, the whole nine yards. This will not make a lot of wrestlers comfortable because most of them are used to a "gut feeling" approach to the business. But this is 1990 and it's a marketing world. It could be that the current approach to the NWA presentation is the correct one. But with as much money riding on it, some firm scientific research ought to back that up and be available as a guide. It may cost \$250,000 to do the exhaustive research necessary for the company to position itself as the proper alternative but it will be well worth the expense. I can tell you, from personal experience, the research done for my news department at WWAY in Wilmington, N.C., was a major key to our ratings turnaround.

WHY DO YOU HATE THE WWF SO MUCH? (Mike Billings, Odessa TX)

I don't. I'm not crazy about them. Because their style of presentation simply doesn't appeal to me, except in the rare instance where ex-NWA wrestlers (mostly like Tully & Arn) are allowed to show their stuff. But then, again, Vince McMahon isn't exactly after a 35-year-old white male. He'd be after my six-year-old kid, if I had one, to get him to beg Daddy to take him to the coliseum. To beg Daddy to buy him a Hulk Hogan bandana. To beg Daddy to buy him a Jim Duggan 2x4. It doesn't really matter whether STEVE likes Vince's presentation, the bulk of America does. I do have a problem with the exaggerated figures, the truth-stretching public relations hype, the total abandonment of pro wrestling's rich history prior to 1984, and the fact that I think that if Vince ever becomes the total czar, it endangers the very survival of pro wrestling because there will be no alternative. It's not much unlike what happened to ROLLER DERBY in the 1970s when it and a competing group hyped themselves right off of TV and virtually out of business. I don't suggest that other promotions aren't guilty of excesses and racial and cultural tastelessness (i.e., Chris Adams' WCCW interview last week) but I'm a bit bothered when children are exposed to the gyrations of a Rick Rude with open sexual connotations, often at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning in some cities. I shudder to think some minorities may look on Slick as a role model and I still find the whole act of Akeem taste-

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less and I still have a problem with the way Hulk Hogan was portrayed at both WRESTLEMANIA IV and this year's ROYAL RUMBLE. Here is "say your prayers, eat your vitamins" Hogan bashing Ted DiBiase with a chair to set up Randy Savage's title victory....a clear message to kids that it's okay to cheat to win, even for a positive role model. At RUMBLE, Hogan is eliminated from the battle royal and then proceeds to bash his eliminators across the arena as opposed to accepting a graceful defeat. You may suggest this as a Pollyannaish attitude. But when the most-watched promotion in this country, which draws more than 70% of the children 2-11 who watch pro wrestling in the U.S., I think a bit more responsibility should be shown with the messages conveyed. That's where I have my biggest problem with Vince, not that I never got irritated with Dusty's parking lot attack in the NWA or Ric Flair as a sex pervert during the Precious angle of '87.

YOU STOPPED GIVING THE RESULTS OF TV MATCHES BEFORE THEY'RE SHOWN. WHY? (Mike Drummond, Hammond IN)

Because after about 15 issues, many of my subscribers told me words to the effect, "We would rather be surprised. Don't spoil it for us. Let us see it for ourselves." And I have attempted to listen. In truth, it is a journalistic compromise. The matches have already occurred and been seen by a few thousand people. But I know how angry I get when I have to miss a sporting event, videotape it and some bright soul tells me the score. It just goes to show so-called "smart" fans are still just plain fans at heart.

WHAT ONE THING DO YOU THINK PRO WRESTLING HAS LOST SINCE 1984? (Buddy Freeman, Perry FL)

Its sense of immediacy. I think advance videotaping, which will be with us forever for economic and efficiency sake, is the worst thing to ever happen to TV wrestling---the kind where shows are recorded two to three weeks in advance. Even Titan, who handles angles and house show coordination better than anyone in the business ruins surprises for fans when it schedules interviews at TV tapings and a new guy has a belt but on the weekly show, he's still the challenger. TBS did a tremendous thing by taping its Saturday show only two days in advance so specific references could be made to the Wednesday night CLASH. But we've lost the immediate feel of the old same-day tapings in the Atlanta show. Like when Lex Luger won back the U.S. belt in Bluefield, W. Va., but no one was told on TV until 12 days later.

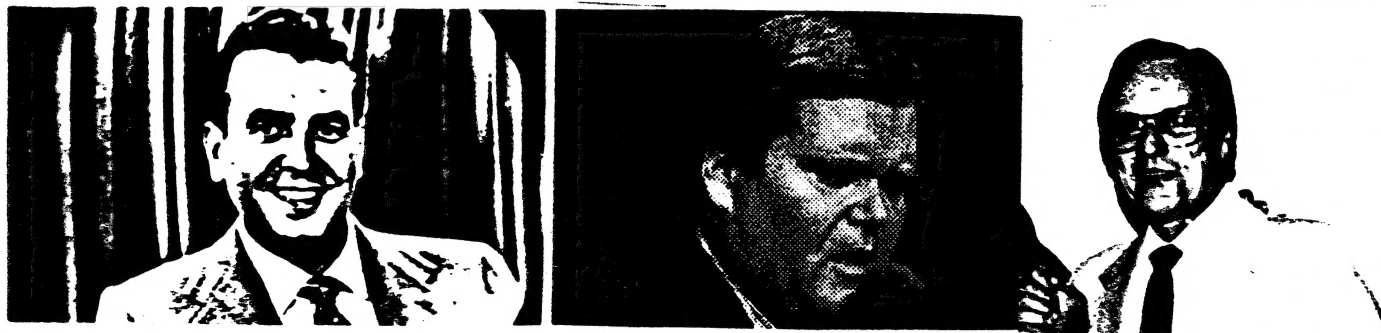
WHAT'S BEEN THE TOUGHEST PART ABOUT DOING MATWATCH? (Gary Grimes, Tuskegee AL)

Staying awake. Literally---I am close to the point of exhaustion juggling a career and a sidelight I love so much. Plus, I have been working on a 225-page history of TV & PRO WRESTLING, dating back to 1941, which will soon be in revision. Rebecca has been very supportive of this effort, even though she can't stand the ringropes because it is one of the first hobbies I've had to take my mind off work since we've been married. Believe me, as a TV news director, it was just like being a booker---trying to juggle the fragile egos of reporters who all want the lead story and develop a creative plan four, six, eight months ahead which is a crashshoot as to whether it will take hold with viewers. I was consumed by it. MATWATCH has been a pleasant diversion from work pressures. Would I give it up? Only if Rebecca and I are fortunate enough to start a family and MATWATCH potentially took away from time I should be spending with a child. So, if in the future I write a piece saying "no subscriptions beyond such-and-such a date," take it that an addition is on the way.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST THING ABOUT DOING MATWATCH? (Several questioners)

That's easy. All the friends I have made, both seen and unseen. I have been fortunate enough to earn the trust of a number of fine people within the wrestling business. Yes, even the NWA executives I was recently accused of being far more "buddy-buddy" with than I will ever be probably wish I were not doing this but I like to believe there is a mutual respect between us. So many, many great people who call to keep us posted on aspects of the business they know I want to include in MATWATCH are far too numerous for me to list but they know who they are. Things like traveling to Nashville with devout fan Dick Bourne, seeing one of the three great Flair-Steamboat matches live and learning that people in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, England and Japan all love wrestling enough to subscribe to this humble publication. And those many notes from people who simply say, "We enjoy MATWATCH every week." That's made it all worth it.

Voices: The All-Star Team



THREE OF STEVE'S PLAY-BY-PLAY ALL STARS: (L-R): Dennis James, Jim Ross, Gordon Solie

Since my field is television, for this anniversary issue, I wanted to share with you my all-star team of the great announcers in wrestling TV history. My selections are purely subjective but they are based on live and taped events I have been privileged to witness with all of them and all have earned a fond place in my personal archive:

1. ED CAPRAL, Georgia, All-South, World Wide: The master master of ceremonies and wrestling play-by-play man. He is a native Georgian but you'd never know it from the delivery. A consummate mainline-sports style which treated wrestling with dignity and its contestants with the ultimate respect. The greatest tribute I can pay to Ed is that I cut many a Saturday night date short to spend the 11:00 hour with him. Some promotion should use Ed as a coach for budding announcers. He made the era of 1954-77 respectable.
2. GORDON SOLIE, Florida, Georgia/WCW, Various others: The greatest play-by-play name over a period of years this sport will ever know. His catchphrases are now a book of famous quotations. A man who was TBS wrestling for 12 years and all too abruptly disappeared.
3. JIM ROSS, UWF, NWA (synd.), WCW: Indeed, the announcer of the '80s, Jim made the greatest call I've ever heard in the first Flair-Steamboat match in Chicago, wringing the tension and as prepared as I've ever heard a commentator. The only reason he's not #1 overall is longevity, which will eventually come.
4. DICK LANE, California: Probably the father of TV wrestling, Lane convinced an experimental L.A. station to begin airing wrestling in 1941. He was the creator of the interview to build feud interest as we know it today. A true legend through the mid-'70s.
5. LANCE RUSSELL, Memphis, NWA: A man whose talents are currently being underappreciated now on a national basis but carved a style and cornerstone dear to Memphis fans for over 30 years.
6. PAUL BOESCH, Texas: Truly a fan's announcer and fan's promoter. So good at what he did, he transcended the wrestlers who came and went since he originated Texas TV wrestling in the late 1940s.
7. DENNIS JAMES, NWA on DuMont: The biggest mainline celebrity ever to call wrestling and the only man ever to win an Emmy for doing it. The man who used to gear his comments to older women ("Okay, mother, that's a hammerlock) went onto greater fame as a perennial game show host.
8. GENE OKERLUND, AWA, WWF: Many people feel Okerlund has become as much a caricature as the organization for which he works but one can easily forget, Gene can call an excellent match and was one of the reasons Vince McMahon originally hired him.
9. BOB HOWELL, Alabama/Gulf Coast: For five years in the early seventies, Bob Howell had the best voice next to Ed Capral's, as far as delivery, I have ever heard. He was every bit as good calling pinfalls as he is now as one of the South's top news anchors.
10. BOB CAUDLE, NWA: The old smoothie. If Bob Caudle doesn't get the respect he deserves, it's because he makes it look so easy. He will never embarrass you on any telecast and has a knack for being himself few announcers ever master.

The Doctor Speaks Out

(EDITOR'S NOTE: In the last year, I have become acquainted with one of the Southeast's leading analysts of trends in pro wrestling as popular culture. Dr. Gerald Morton, along with George O'Brien, is co-author of the 1985 book, *WRESTLING TO RASSLIN'*, which traces the sport from its origins to the era just preceding the Vince McMahon/WEF explosion. Dr. Morton is a regular analyst on radio and television newscasts prior to the nation's top supercards and is in the beginning stages of an article on TV wrestling for a major magazine. Dr. Morton agreed to a one-on-one interview for this anniversary edition of MATWATCH and I think you'll find his comments most interesting.)

FSB: SINCE YOU WROTE YOUR BOOK, TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS IN THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY HAVE CHANGED THE FACE OF PRO WRESTLING. HAS THAT BEEN GOOD OR BAD FOR THE FAN? NOW, IN YOUR VIEW, HAS IT CHANGED THE COURSE OF THE IN-RING DRAMA?

MORTON: Although the changes in the television industry have resulted in more wrestling programs for the fans, which might be considered a benefit, these programs tend to be more designed for marketing purposes than anything else. They are worse, in this sense, even than the "teasers" of years past. The bottom line is that the wrestling scripts are now written for the television medium and not for the "pot-luck dinner" atmosphere of a small, intimate arena. The distance between wrestler and fan is thus enhanced, which is a loss.

FSB: AT THE POINT YOUR BOOK CONCLUDES, VINCE McMAHON WAS JUST ON THE VERGE OF HIS NATIONAL EXPLOSION. WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF THE "McMAHON ERA" OF PRO WRESTLING? ORIGINALLY, YOU DIDN'T THINK HIS STYLE OF PROMOTION WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL MORE THAN THREE YEARS. WHY? AND WHY DO YOU FEEL HE HAS SURVIVED AS THE DOMINANT LEADER IN THE INDUSTRY?

MORTON: I did underestimate McMahon, or maybe I gave wrestling fans too much credit. The "McMahon era," as you call it, may destroy wrestling; it has at least made it a much less appealing entertainment. What he has done is take all the "abuses" the old wrestling programs flirted with and made them his formula for success. He has, for example, taken character to caricature and struggle to stupidity. Why shouldn't it work in a society that thought the mindless immorality of Ronald Reagan was Presidential leadership?

FSB: SHOULD THE DAY COME THAT McMAHON IS THE SOLE NATIONAL PROMOTER OF PRO WRESTLING, WHAT WOULD YOU FORECAST WOULD BE THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF FAN INTEREST IN THE GENRE?

MORTON: That can't happen! God will not allow it.

FSB: GIVEN THE ERA OF SATELLITE TV, COULD REGIONAL WRESTLING TERRITORIES EVER BE GENUINELY SUCCESSFUL IN THE FUTURE?

MORTON: Actually, I believe the regional territories will be what's left when the smoke clears from the McMahon/Turner "match." Wrestling works best in a small town, local interest atmosphere. The fans can become more involved in the drama. They ultimately want that. Once the groupies are gone and the real fans left, the local or regional approach will be best.

FSB: AT ONE POINT, YOU PREDICTED THE MORE "VIOLENT" STYLE OF WRESTLING, AS REPRESENTED BY JIM CROCKETT WOULD OVERTAKE McMAHON'S "CARTOON" STYLE IN POPULARITY. HAD CROCKETT NOT OVEREXTENDED HIMSELF FINANCIALLY, DO YOU STILL BELIEVE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE?

MORTON: I would not want to suggest that the fans would prefer to embrace violence more than humor. Long before McMahon's move, many regional promotions used the comedy formula successfully or sought a balance between the two. To distance himself from McMahon, Crockett went too far and lost the balance. But, yes, the dramas of wrestling would, I think, longer endure if not made bufoonish, which is the WWF approach, perhaps best illustrated in the reworking of One Man Gang (as Akeem).

FSB: A YEAR AGO, IN A TV INTERVIEW, YOU STATED YOUR CONCERN FOR THE MESSAGES PRO WRESTLING SENDS TO CHILDREN. ELABORATE ON THAT. HOW DO YOU HANDLE THE SUBJECT WITH YOUR OWN KIDS?

MORTON: Wrestling scripts present violence as a proper tool for achieving moral ends. It equates violence, or the ability to be violent, with sexual prowess (i.e., [Ric] Flair's "sixty-minute man" routine and the Hogan/Savage joust for Miss Elizabeth). It plays on our social and nationalistic stereotypes. Worst of all, McMahon has made evil laughable, which allows us to dismiss it and to accept anything a hero

does to destroy it. These all are inappropriate messages for children who do not have the ability to cut through the images and see them for what they are. For children, even more than adults, the distinction between image and reality is small. It's simple. I don't want my children to adopt the vision of the world presented by wrestling. They don't see more than a moment or two of wrestling now and then and I explain to them what they see for what it is.

FSB: TRADITIONALLY, "CAMP" STYLES OF ENTERTAINMENT, SUCH AS McMAHON'S WWF, HAVE A LIMITED LIFE OF POPULARITY BEFORE THEY WANE. ON TV, "BATMAN," "GILLIGAN'S ISLAND," "LAUGH-IN," FOR EXAMPLE, ALL ONLY RAN TWO TO FOUR YEARS. YET, McMAHON APPEARS TO HAVE A LOT OF STRENGTH AFTER SIX YEARS. IS IT BECAUSE HE TRULY APPEALS TO THE MASSES? OR IS HE CULTIVATING NEW GENERATIONS OF CHILDREN EVERY 3 YEARS OR SO?

MORTON: McMahon does seem to be appealing to the masses and in a way that appeals to children both. But even before McMahon, wrestling was "camp." He has simply "camped" it up more. Again, I think the time was right for his approach. I'm just surprised it has lasted.

FSB: IF YOU COMPARE HIM TO SPORTS FIGURES, HULK HOGAN PARALLELS ARNOLD PALMER, MICKEY MANTLE, OR O. J. SIMPSON AS ONE WHO TRANSCENDS THE SPORT ITSELF INTO CELEBRITY STATUS. DO YOU SEE ANYONE COMING ALONG WHO MAY BE THE NEXT HOGAN?

MORTON: I am amazed at Hogan's appeal. But it is there, no question about that. His one-dimensional character and obvious limitations in the ring should leave him in the dust of talents like Jim Cornette. But, no, I see no Hogans in the wings, thank goodness. Even McMahon has not been able to come up with a temporary substitute.

FSB: WHAT CHANCES DO YOU SEE TED TURNER HAVING AT BECOMING A MAJOR PLAYER IN PRO WRESTLING? WHAT DOES HE HAVE TO DO TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE COUNTERPROMOTER, IF YOU WILL, TO THE WWF?

MORTON: Turner is a showman and a businessman, just like McMahon. But the NWA is in shambles and I'm not sure even he (Turner) can make it a viable alternative to the WWF. He has some good people but I still see them looking for direction. At the moment, the NWA is not using its people to advantage and that better change---SOON!

FSB: FINALLY, WHAT'S YOUR OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT STATE OF PRO WRESTLING? DO YOU SEE CONTINUED TRENDS OF THE BIGGER PROMOTIONS SWALLOWING UP THE TALENT OF SMALLER ONES? OR IS WRESTLING HYPED TO THE POINT THAT IT POTENTIALLY MAY SELF-DESTRUCT A FEW YEARS DOWN THE ROAD?

MORTON: My prediction is that when the smoke clears, we'll again see a loose network of regional promotions working the old formula of a little violence and a little humor, all set in some smelly National Guard Armory, right where Brute Bernard and Skull Murphy made it work for years. Oh, how I miss those days... Rip Hawk, The Kentuckians, George Becker.... and HOMER O'DELL!

FSB: WOULD YOU CONTEMPLATE WRITING A SEQUEL TO YOUR INITIAL BOOK?

MORTON: Only with about \$10,000 in advance royalties from the publisher.

(Dr. Morton is a professor in the Department of English, Foreign Languages and Philosophy at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala.)

CABLE RATINGS RAP

Week Ending June 19	Rtg	Shr	Homes
WEF PTW (USA 6/19)	3.4	5.6	1.6 mil.
WEF ALL-AM (USA 6/18)	2.8	9.5	1.32 M.
NWA WCW (TBS 6/17)	1.6	3.4	786,000
NWA M.E. (TBS 6/17)	0.6	6.2	295,000

(ANALYSIS: These figures give you a bird's-eye as to how imbedded in the mainstream the WEF has become. On a show with a Brooklyn Brawler-Bad News Brown main event, PRIME TIME can pull a 5-plus share in prime. WCW was obviously hurt by its Saturday 8-10 slot, even though it jumped to a 2.0 and 4 share by 9:45. Sunday MAIN EVENT was pre-empted.)

SYNDICATION NOTE: For the week ending June 4, WEF drew an 8.3 on 237 stations. No figure was available for NWA shows.

PROGRAM NOTE: NWA POWER HOUR is skedded this Friday at either 11:20 (ET) or after Braves-Dodgers. Between doubleheader games at around 8:15, a BEST OF NWA seg will air.

*****WORLD CLASS CHANGES FORMAT TO USWA WRESTLING*****
*****NEW SYNDICATOR NAMED, EXTRA SHOW ADDED*****

DALLAS - World Class Championship Wrestling, in a move designed to increase television exposure, is dropping its name, changing syndicators and adding a second and third series to its syndicated lineup, MATWATCH has learned. The changes are expected to take place within the next four weeks. Planned increase usage by promoter Jerry Jarrett of Memphis wrestling stars has fueled speculation the CWA group is about to shut down but that account has been denied by sources close to the Memphis promotion.

The new lineup will be sanctioned by the renamed U.S. Wrestling Alliance and the primary syndicated show will be called USWA World Wide Wrestling (though one source has told us the show may be called USA WORLD WIDE). Secondary shows will air under the titles USWA CHALLENGE and BEST OF USWA WRESTLING. MATWATCH has been told Andrews Syndication Co., which has handled World Class, is being replaced as distributor by Action Media Group, the company which currently sells national advertising for the NWA package. No information is available on how the change may affect Action's deal with the NWA. WCW executive vice president Jim Herd was out of town last Thursday and Friday and could not be reached for comment.

The move comes somewhat as a surprise at a time when clearances for pro wrestling shows are increasingly difficult for promotions. WORLD CLASS has been the cornerstone show for Bob Syres' All-Pro Wrestling Network, which also includes CWA and formerly included PRO WRESTLING THIS WEEK and P.O.W.W.

Ross Resigns From NWA Booking Panel

ATLANTA - NWA announcer Jim Ross has asked to drop off the promotion's booking committee, MATWATCH has learned. Ross is expected to retain the role as senior producer of the NWA TBS and syndicated telecasts.

Ross' responsibilities had become increasingly crowded since he took on booking chores in late March, between handling production, commentary and his slot on the committee. The 1988 MATWATCH Announcer of the Year made the decision to relinquish the booking responsibility early last week.

WCW senior vice president Jim Herd could not be reached for comment on whether Ross would be replaced on the committee, which includes Herd, Eddie Gilbert, Kevin Sullivan, Ric Flair and Jim Barnett.

Solie Makes Return To TBS Wrestling

ATLANTA - Former WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING host Gordon Solie has returned to TBS as anchor of a news segment on the weekly NWA POWER HOUR.

Solie made his debut on the premiere POWER show last Friday as host of WRESTLING NEWS NETWORK. NWA officials had kept the move quiet until mid-week. In the segment, Solie will do two minutes of NWA updates and one minute of briefs on other alliances, including the WWF, breaking the five-year tradition of the two largest promotions not publicly referring to the other.

Solie, who hosted TBS wrestling from 1973-1985, will continue as host of the Florida wrestling program.

PWF Gets New Investor; Solie Will Take Helm

TAMPA - Finding a new investor, the Professional Wrestling Federation will continue in business, though it may return to its roots as Florida Championship Wrestling.

Businessman Wayne Coulter has bought into the promotion, though details are unclear as to whether Coulter bought out the 60 percent interest held by Dusty Rhodes, who recently abandoned the group for the WWF.

Gordon Solie, a partner in the group and host of the PWF TV series, will handle day-to-day operations for the promotion.

The promotion is expected to eliminate the PWF title, which Rhodes created for himself as a "world" championship.

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COMINGS & GOINGS

SNAKEBITTEN: As if the NWA hasn't had enough bad news, Terry Funk injured his back in Macon GA June 19 and early diagnosis is a broken bone behind the rib cage. Likely, he will not work before the July 23 PPV but he'll work that one if it kills him. TV viewers will not be told of Terry's situation.

AILING LIST: Ricky Santana reportedly damaged a knee in Savannah June 20. It came during what was described as an "excellent" tag match with Ricky & Brian Pillman teamed.

RICH & LUCKY: Tommy Rich, as you saw, made his NWA return Saturday night and will work TV next week vs. Bill Irwin. Tommy's been on a tuna diet, dropped 15 pounds and is working without a contract. Maybe they'll call him Starkist Tommy Rich.

SEEING RED: After Muta sprayed Eddie Gilbert with the Red Mist on WCW, there was a 20-minute delay in taping next week's show because the set was sprayed red, too.

FUNK'S GRILL: Judge for yourself but I feel Terry's seg with Lex Luger Saturday on WCW falls flat. It's like a regular interview, just with a title.

OUR PRAYERS: At deadline, Jerry Blackwell had worsened, suffering from fluid around the heart and pneumonia. We've been told the situation is "critical," and our prayers are with Jerry and his family.

EMPIRE STATES: In my view, the Skyscrapers will become big, big stars. Sid Vicious was particularly drawing heavy heat and Danny Spivey just plain looked mean. No, they don't work in classic NWA style but they're a couple of sorely-needed monsters and the pairing with Theodore R. Long is shrewd.

RUMOR CONTROL: There is absolutely no truth to the resurfacing rumor that Ted Turner is selling to Vince McMahon. Says Jack Petrik, WCW chieftain: "I just ordered a million dollars worth of production equipment so we don't have to go to TBS to post-produce our shows. I can't emphasize enough, we're in this for the long haul." Also, a story surfaced that the CWA will shut down within 4 weeks. While I've been told that's possible, there has been no announcement and no plans set to close.

NO HOLDS: The movie dropped to #7 on the gross earnings list this week, dropping 39% to \$1.9 million (week) and \$12.3 million total.

WRESTLING ON WHEELS: Southern had a solid turnout for its Quality Ford show in Columbus GA Sunday. But Tommy Rich, so heavily featured in promo ads, was scratched after his NWA start.

NO MORE TITLE: The PWF belt is definitely history, so we're told. They'll concentrate on the Florida focus of the promotion now. June 18 in Orlando: Nasty Boys d. Jomo Kenya & Louis Estaio; Steelman d. Al Perez by COR; Dustin Rhodes d. The Terminator; Steve Keirn d. Nick Busich; Ho Chi Wen d. Brett Sawyer. Last night, it was to be Kendall Windham vs. Lou Perez. Only 173 turned out on the 18th.

THEY LOVE HIM: The biggest pop of the Center Stage WCW tapings last Wednesday was the surprise appearance of Ric Flair at the end of the show to air this Saturday. It was the most sustained reax I'd heard in the theatre. And a major cheer went up when Gordon Solie's name was announced for his slot on the POWER HOUR.

BIG INCREASE: A major increase in the number of blacks was registered in the crowd at Center Stage. It was noticeable the major babyface support for Muta by African-American fans there and they were putting heavy heat on the Skyscrapers.

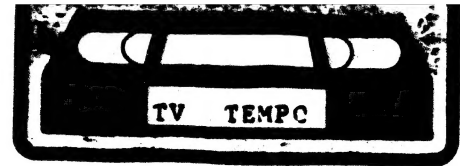
CALENDAR: Here are the dates for the post-BASH NWA supercards: FALL BRAWL '89 (Sept. 12), OCTOBER PPV (Oct. 15), CLASH IX (Nov. 15), STARRCADE (Dec. 17). The two PPVs will be on Sunday afternoons (4:30-7:30 ET). Next year's NWA pay shows will be on Wednesday nights.

GOPHER RODDY?: Roddy Piper will have a guest star role on a CBS LOVE BOAT movie, set to air next February. Filming has begun on the Carribean and Tom Bosley, Julia Duffy, Ted Shackelford and Joe Regalbuto will join Rod on the Sky Princess.

GLADIATORS: Keep your eye on this new AMERICAN GLADIATORS syndie series to premiere this fall. It's weekly and will involve 3 men and 3 women in arena contests of joust, powerball and something called "the eliminator." It's been termed in some quarters "the next era of wrestling."

OTHER STUFF: The NWA did have continued discussions last Monday with a major Southern star and I expect a decision in that situation in a few days.

BLINDFOLDED: CWF headlining a 12-man "blind-fold" battle royal Sunday, along with the Mortons vs. Jimmy Golden & Mongolian Stomper. Talk is that Robert Fuller may be returning but he is skedded to start full-time in Dallas this week.



SCALE: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor. PLUS - Mid-scale rating.

(SCW) - Bullet/Scott Armstrong d. Invader/Frankie Fountain; Mike Golden d. Steve Reeves; Mr. Atlanta wins DQ over Nightmare Jim Powell when Mr. Wrestling II saves Nightmare from unmasking; Steve Lawler/Dino Minelli/Joel Deaton d. David Sammartino/Chic Donovan/Steve Prichard. RESTHOLD.

(CWA/2 Wks. Ago) - Jeff Jarrett d. The Hangman Master of Pain/Dutch Mantel d. Chris Frazier/Ken Raper; Action Jackson/Billy Travis d. Rough & Ready; Wildside d. Frankie Lancaster/Deuce Mason; Jerry Lawler/Freddy d. Keith Robertson/Mr. Devastation. INTERVIEW: Ronald V. Gossett wants Freddy's mask, claiming it's Jackie Fargo. DRAW.

(CWA/Last Week) - USWA TITLE: Lawler wins DQ over Black Bart to retain belt; MOP/Mantel d. Spike Huber/Alan Reynolds; Wildside d. Van Van Horne/Raper; Jarrett d. Tony Anthony by DQ when Bart runs in; Freddy d. Roberson. ANGLE: Gossett says he'll wrestle...but only vs. retired wrestlers. Stan Frazier (Uncle Elmer) comes out to challenge. POWERSLAM.

(ACW) - Tommy Angel/Ricky Nelson d. S. Pacific Connection; Ivan Koloff d. Len Wagner; Ken Shamrock d. Scott Spangler; Ring Lords d. Johnson/Seabolt; David Isley d. L.A. Stephens; New Rock & Roll Express (Sam Houston/Robert Gibson) vs. M.O.D. Squad still going as show ends. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(WCCW) - Gary Young d. Eric Embry in Thunderdome match. Eric is handcuffed to rope but holds off Young for 3 min. before Tojo Yamamoto & Skandor Akbar run in. Yamamoto tosses powder at Eric; Kerry Von Erich vs. Matt Borne (draw); RECAP: Last week's Tojo-Eric angle. VIDEO: Dutch Mantel. DRAW.

(CWF) - U.S. JR. TITLE: Danny Davis d. Kevin Dillinger to regain belt; New Fantastics (Bobby & Jackie Fulton) win DQ over Jimmy Golden/Mongolian Stomper when Stomper hits Bobby w. CWA title belt; Todd Morton d. Carl Fergie; Wendell Cooley d. Russian Destroyer; From ACW: Sam Houston d. L.A. Stephens. ANGLE: Adrian Street & Terry Garvin argue over who wrote the music on Street's album. DRAW.

(PWF) - Ho Chi Wen d. Coconut Kid; Al Perez d. El Cid; Dustin Rhodes d. Mike McClaskey;

Jomo Kenya wins DQ over Brett Sawyer for over-the-top; Kendall Windham d. Greg Labonte; Perez vs. Steelman ends in major 4-man brawl as Dustin & Kendal run in. ANGLE: Steve Keirn shows clips of his father as P.O.W. and challenges Diamond Dallas Page to sympathize. REPLAY: Manny Fernandez d. Eddie Sweat. Gordon Solie announces PWF title finals for July 13.

(NWA/TBS) - [POWER HOUR]: Road Warriors win DQ over Samoan Swat Team when Freebirds run in & SST kidnap Paul Ellering & Paul E. Dangerously clobbers Ellering with phone and SST club him w. pineapple & cover in Samoan wrap; Michael Hayes/Jimmy Garvin d. Scott Hall/Ranger Ross when Terry Gordy runs in & DDTs Hall; Terry Funk d. Ricky Santana. WRESTLING NEWS NETWORK: Gordon Solie updates Luger turn, Bash PPV & Teddy Long's Sky-scrapers, along with news from WEF, WCCW & Fla. FUNK'S GRILL: Terry tries to lure Missy Hyatt into a love scene but the Steiners show up to end the steam. INTERVIEW: Ric Flair says he won't come back if he's less than 100%. POWERSLAM. [WCW]: Midnight Express/Steve Williams d. Keith Steinborn/Fred Avery/Jeff James...Jim Cornette insults Freebirds into impromptu match vs. M Ex & M Ex d. Garvin & Terry Gordy when Stan Lane packages Jimmy. Hayes & Garvin insist they'll put up WORLD TAG belts and keep them vs. M Ex when Gordy interferes & knocks Bobby Eaton from top rope into guard rail & floor lights; Sting d. Chance Myers; Steiner Bros. d. Snake Brown/Cruel Connection. ANGLES: Sting & Lex Luger confront each other and Sting declares Luger makes him sick; Rick Steiner intros girlfriend "Robin Green" and gives her roses but during Steiners' match, Kevin Sullivan & Mike Rotunda crush the roses; Tommy Rich returns & challenges Luger & Flair; Eddie Gilbert starts pounding on Gary Hart but Great Muta sprays red mist into Eddie's face. POWERSLAM-PLUS.

(NWA/SYND.) - [WORLD WIDE]: Santana d. Big Al Green; Sid Vicious d. Bob Emery; Bill Irwin d. Mike Justice & whips him but Santana saves; Rick Steiner d. Jim Bryant; Dynamic Dudes d. New Zealand Militia but Militia beat Dudes with boomerangs after; Ross d. Brown; Muta d. Scott Steiner & Sullivan/Rotunda run in after but Rick saves w. a briefcase. DRAW.

[NWA PRO]: Ricky Steamboat d. The Raider; Dudes d. Trent Knight/Keith Steinborn; Vicious d. Mark Smith; Ross d. Avery; Muta d. Bucky Sieglar; Militia d. Randy Rose/Emery but Dudes save in post-match beating; Steiners vs. Varsity Club double countout. REPLAYS: Luger turn, Eddie-Muta fire angle, Freebirds win world tag title over M Ex,

PEDICINO'S NOSE: Joe reviews "sour side" of Luger. **RESTHOLD-PLUS.**

(AWA) - Tribute to Baron Von Raschke, including clips of old matches; **REPLAY:** Destruction Crew injures Wahoo McDaniel w. hardhats; **INTERVIEW:** Wahoo announces retirement, due to "detached retina." **BOMB-PLUS.**

(WEF/USA) - [PRIME TIME]: Warlord d. Blue Blazer; Rougeaus d. Tim Horner/Chris Zarna; Rick Martel d. Jerry Lynn; Other winners: Young Stallions, Hillbilly Jim; **MAIN EVENT:** Bad News Brown d. Brooklyn Brawler. **SCHLAVONE'S VIDEO CORNER:** Anabolic Warrior d. Greg Valentine. **ANGLE:** Bobby Heenan walks off set for 2nd straight week. **RESTHOLD-PLUS.**

(WEF/SYND.) - [SUPERSTARS]: Barbarian d. Tom Stark; Demolition d. Chris Curtis/Tom Stone; Barry Windham (Debut) d. Frankie DeFalco; Jim Duggan d. Jake Milliman; Tully & Arn d. Jim Evans/Jim Powers; Hillbilly d. Butler Stevens; Rick Rude d. Sonny Rogers; **UPDATE:** Jimmy Snuka/Honky Tonk Man Bro. Luv angle. **BRO. LUV:** Ted DiBiase announces Jake Roberts suffers "career-ending" injury. **DUSTY'S AMERICANA:** Rhodes shovels horse manure. **ANGLE:** Woman delays in kissing Rude twice when Anabolic runs in, destroys Rude & takes his belt. **DRAW.** [SPOTLIGHT]: Martel d. Evans; Rockers d. Boris Zhukov/Milliman; DiBiase d. Red Tyler; Sheepwackers d. Brown/Brawler and Brown gives Brawler ghetto blaster for losing. **BRO. LUV:** Honky-Snuka guitar angle. **RESTHOLD.** [CHALLENGE]: Sheeps d. Dusty Wolfe/Guido Merkens; Martel d. Tyler; Haku d. Scott Becker; Brutus Beefcake d. Tom Burton; Rougeaus d. Zarna/Horner; Koko B. Ware d. Chris Megan; **AMERICANA:** Dusty delivers pizza. **BOMB-PLUS.**

Lines of the Week - 1. Gordon Solie, **POWER HOUR:** "And that's the way it is..." (appropo for the Walter Cronkite of wrestling). 2. Jim Cornette, **WCW:** "The only man (Dr. Death) tough enough to strap a bucket of chicken on his back & ride a motorcycle through Ethiopia." 3. Ronald V. Gossett, **CWA:** "I've got the baddest man the NWA ever had---Black Bart!" 4. Cornette, to Jim Ross, **POWER HOUR:** "You didn't wear swim trunks did you? I don't want you giving the kids nightmares." 5. Gene Ligon, **ACW:** "L.A. (Stephens) talks to bags---of course, I've seen some of his girl friends." 6. Charlie Platt, **CWF,** to Tom Prichard: "The way you keep scratching your hair, I'm afraid I might get fleas." 7. Dusty Rhodes, **WEF:** "I AM the common man. Money can't buy the American Dream." 8. Jesse Ventura, **WEF:** "I

keep waiting for something to crawl out of his (Hillbilly's) hair." 9. Tojo Yamamoto, **WCCW:** "You gonna tell me, 'I sorry, Mr. Honorable Yamamoto!'" 10. Dustin Rhodes, **PWF:** "Now, Kendall, I'm gonna stomp a mudhole in you so deep nobody can find you."

11. Ric Flair, **POWER HOUR:** "If I can't stay--at least I'll know I went out on top." 12. Tommy Rich, **SCW:** "I don't do nothin' for free, Quality Ford." 13. Ligon, **ACW:** "There may be some air but it's definitely not in L.A. Stephens." 14. Michael Hayes, **WCW:** "I've got what Ted Turner could never give to Atlanta---the only world championship." 15. Cornette, **WCW,** to Freebirds: "They (M Ex) will make your breath smell like Kiwi boot polish." 16. Ventura, **WEF:** "You, McMahon, who can't make your college shuffleboard team." 17. Larry Nelson, **AWA:** "Baron Von Raschke has always had a way with words." 18. Terry Funk, **WCW:** "Ric Flair, you were once a god in the NWA---now, you have the Devil raging hell & that is me." 19. Scott Steiner, **WCW:** "Rick, those are our neighbor's flowers." 20. Gossett, **CWA:** "I'm so mad, I could kick my behind if I could reach it."

21. Dallas Page, **PWF:** "Al Perez is just pouting because he isn't getting enough attention from the Diamond Dolls." 22. Sting, **WCW,** to Luger: "I didn't know you were **ALLOWING** me to travel with you or have a nice meal with you. I'll just allow myself to say you make me sick."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Luger, **WCW:** "You (the fans) should have been catering to me." 2. Solie, **POWER HOUR:** "Lex Luger has always been a discipline problem." 3. Marc Lowrance, **WCCW,** to Tojo: "I'm not listening to you. You're a disgrace!" 4. Wahoo McDaniel, **AWA:** "When they say you have a chance of going blind, I say, 'This is it.'"

INSIDE INFO OF THE WEEK - Solie, **POWER HOUR:** "Lex Luger was kicked out of the University of Miami for bad behavior."

IGNORANCE IS BLISS AWARD - Vince McMahon, **WEF:** "I don't know that much about **THE WIDOWMAKER.**"

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - 1. Ventura, **WEF:** "What does Elizabeth think about that torrid love affair of Hogan in the movies?" 2. Paul E., **NWA PRO:** "How in the world can 2 blond surfers (Dudes) hope to make it against 2 animals (Militia)?" 3. Ventura, **WEF:** "How often you figure he (Hillbilly) washes them overalls?" 4. Cornette, **POWER HOUR:** "Hey, Funk, how much did you pay for that grill? \$1.98?" 5. Skip Caray, **BRAVES:** "Will the SST overcome the Road Warriors?"

BEST FEATURE - 1. Wrestling News Network, **POWER HOUR.** 2. NO HOLDS BARRED music video.

BEST PICTURES - 1. WCCW, Embry-Young match & aftermath. 2. POWER HOUR, Klondike Bill face down on floor during Funk-Santana match.

WORST PICTURES - Freebirds-Midnights impromptu match, WCW/TBS. Did Tommy Edwards have anything available but a wide angle camera on the ring area.

NICKNAMES OF THE WEEK - 1. "The Little Fanny," given by Tommy Rich to Samuel Kent.

DREADED GLITCH AWARDS - 1. NWA, for using POWER HOUR match in which Jim Ross gave away that Flair will meet Funk July 23 (that comes from taping 70 matches in six days). 2. PWF, for failure of tape to roll. 3. NWA, for only having one "l" in Funk's GRILL (GRIL).

BLOOPER AWARDS - 1. Gorilla Monsoon, WEF, for calling Brown-Brawler "Battle of the Boroughs" (Harlem is not a borough). 2. Bobby Heenan, WEF, for calling Jake Roberts a past Inter-continental champion (he wasn't).

BOO AWARD - 1. ACW and CWF, for trying to pass off two hybrid teams as "The Rock & Roll Express" and "The Fantastics." 2. TBS, for horribly wide shots during first Freebirds-Midnights confrontation.

*****TUBE TALK*****

The angle converting Tony Schiavone to new host of WRESTLING CHALLENGE was imaginatively handled, bumping Heenan to "analyst." Tony will do well in that role....PWF title is, in fact still on: Dustin, Brian Knobbs, Al Perez, Steve Keirn & Steelman still in hunt....An update to the Page 9 story: we're now told Andrews Syndication, according to two station owners, will continue to handle WCCW (USWA) & Action Media will sell the national ads.... Sam Houston plugged as coming to CWF TV soon.

Brian Pillman makes his TBS debut July 7 on POWER HOUR, teaming with Dudes vs. Irwin & N.Z. Militia....Tom Zenk said to be headed in to the NWA in mid-September....How much longer does Verne think he can fool folks with these awful ESPN shows? A tribute to Von Raschke? Come now....If someone can call us weekly TSN or local Stampede TV results, we'll run them.When Dingdongs wrestled at Center Stage Wednesday night, crowd began singing JINGLE BELLS....That graphic saying, "Hold on, Missy. The "Calvary" is on its way" during FUNK'S GRILL was intentional. Producers said that's

the way Cornette would have said "Cavalry."

PHOTO CREDITS: All pictures in this issue, with the exception of Dennis James (James collection) and Gordon Solie (from MASTER OF THE RING) are by Dennis Brent of PRO WRESTLING DIGEST. Write to Dennis for a complete price list on his pictures and for subscription info to PWD at P.O. Box 796488, DALLAS TX 75379-6488 or call him at (214) 458-7483.

INSTANT REVIEW: NWA POWER HOUR

The kickoff of TBS' NWA weekend concept had some flaws in its premiere, but was an overall highly-entertaining hour.

The debut hour featured three action-filled matches, keynoted by a hot angle of Paul E. Dangerously & the SST attacking the Road Warriors. Jim Cornette & Jim Ross proved to be a solid combination as co-hosts of the show and the POWER HOUR will eventually evolve as Cornette's show.

The "big surprise," as alluded to here last week (the firm contract wasn't signed until after our deadline) was the return of Gordon Solie as host of the WRESTLING NEWS NETWORK segment. Gordon was solid in a segment produced with a graphic look similar to CNN HEADLINE NEWS. The tag line of "that's the way it is..." for Solie was a trademark signoff for the Cronkite of wrestling and some fans were probably shocked to hear some quick bits on other promotions. NWA management feels promotions look stupid not to acknowledge other groups exist. As long as they don't openly boost WEF angles, I find it a good move. I would like to see an electronic newsbeat music track under Solie's delivery.

The hour also served as good cross-promotion for the Saturday and Sunday TBS shows. Plus, the WRESTLER OF THE WEEK award borrowed from producer Joe Pedicino's old PWIW bag of tricks.

Opening night flaws: a FUNK'S GRILL seg which didn't really zing and ended too softly when the Steiners came to save Missy Hyatt; Jim & Jim need to work on not repeating in their lead-ins the opening line you hear in a taped piece (i.e., Ross pitching to his Flair interview "at poolside," etc., which he restated in the first 15 seconds of the tape); and the big one (which was edited out on the Saturday a.m. repeat): inserting a match in which Ross said, "July 23, it'll finally be Flair & Funk," before Flair has revealed his intentions. That accident came from losing track of commentary after taping 70 matches in the last week.

But, all in all, if the NWA top ten and a viewer mail segment is added, this should settle into a quality niche on the weekly TV scene.

It looks like the WWF wrestlers are getting jealous of Zeus and Mr. Rhodes (they should be). Do you think that maybe some of the WWF talent will jump ship? People like DiBiase, Blanchard and Anderson look like they are very angry at Dusty Rhodes coming into the WWF.

WILSON SOLANO
ELMHURST NY

(FSB: I doubt it right away. Their contracts are fairly rigid and very lucrative.)

How did Dusty Rhodes get those scars on his shoulder? The result of some sort of barbed wire match? Or did he teach Kerry Von Erich how to blade? Also, does any wrestler have a more severely scarred forehead than Abdullah the Butcher?

WILLIAM BURNETT
MEMPHIS TN

(FSB: I'm told Dusty's scars come from an injury in his youth. As for your second Q, I doubt it, although Bruiser Brody had a lot of wear and tear on his head.)

Juda Williamson and I went to the 10 pm showing (of NO HOLDS BARRED). It turned out this theatre was pulling the movie off today....we were joined by a man visiting from San Francisco. Three people in a 320-seat theatre. It was great! As to the movie: it had some funny moments. The stunt work was well done. But it's not what I'd take "little Hulksters" to see! It's upsetting to see Titan continue to slap women around. Maybe I was watching the Elizabeth character on the big screen. Zeus gave me a very uneasy feeling. May he be eliminated quickly! Actually, what we watched was nothing more than a big WWF commercial on the giant screen.

DIANE DEVINE
DENVER CO

Well, the CLASH: there were some strong parts, to be sure, but there were also some REALLY weak moments, so the best I could rate it would be a B-. I was hoping for a better show but, considering it was a "freebie," I guess I can't be too picky.

I got tired of all the Army stuff REAL quick. WHAT an ad for the Army! They got great P.R., didn't they? The Dingo songs were AWFUL and embarrassing. I don't care for the Norman bit either as I find it offensive and in poor taste. Making "fun" of mental illness (in an indirect way) should NOT be used as an angle for a wrestler. I much preferred Mike Shaw in his Calgary role.

The Steiners' tag bout was a good one and the Freebirds really looked sharp. Of course, the Funk-Steamboat bout was a real winner except where Ricky dropped Terry over the top rope to the floor and the ref ignored it. As usual, I enjoyed the Midnight Express & the SST. Luger looks to be a better heel this time around. Ric Flair's interview was what I've seen him do in the past (as a face) but it was done well. I can't wait for his more "explosive" interviews in July.

DAVID WILLIAMSON
CLEVELAND TN

YOU SAID IT!

Where is Dark Journey? Can you explain to me Mexican tag matches shown on Galavision? What is your favorite arena food?

JOHN LANIGAN
MCKEESPORT PA

(FSB: John, last I heard D.J. was running a dress shop in California with a partner. I still don't understand the Mexican deal but I'll try to get someone who can analyze it. I swore off arena and coliseum food since eating the greaseburgers served at the Superdome. I tasted them for a week.)

Do you know the whereabouts of former NWA announcer David Crockett, Magnum T.A., Randy and Bill Mulkey, Randy Hogan and former UWF jobber Mike Boyette?

FLOYD PERRY JR.
STOCKTON CA

(FSB: David is a location manager for the NWA now, Magnum is, I'm told, back home in Virginia, Randy and Bill Mulkey are out of the business. Bill is living in Florida. Unfortunately, we've been told Randy is serving a jail term for an alleged molestation case. Randy Hogan has a paint business in east Alabama and I'm still checking on Boyette, who was also once known as The California Hippie.)

If MATWATCH was a wrestler, it'd be Keiiji Muto all the way!

PHIL GALLOWAY
SAN DIEGO CA

I cannot see any kind of success for (NO HOLDS BARRED). Sure, wrestling fans will go see it, myself included. But the general public will not pay for this one. Hogan's acting has nothing to do with it---wrestling movies, even with a big-time wrestling star, will always fail. The only thing this movie will do is get Hogan over with more people. He will become more familiar with the general public.

MARK BENNETT
EAST LANSING MI

Poor Tom Zenk. He leaves the WWF and the "Can-Am Connection." Then, he hustles out of the AWA because he may not be able to keep his Japan dates. Japan or America...you decide.

MIKE STACK
BRANCHBURG NJ

Norman looks just like someone Vince wishes he had, I'm sure. I know the hardcores won't like him because he doesn't work like Makhan Singh did but he was hilarious.

ARLENE GIRALDI
LINCOLN RI

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